

When the young folks and the old folks and all  
who're in between  
Gather round the family fireside and tell of how  
they've been,  
While over in a corner a Christmas-tree is seen,  
O, then its fine to be at home!

And when you're safely sheltered from the windy  
cold,  
With the family all together—the young folks and  
the old,  
And the rosy gates of Christmas morn bright angels  
do unfold  
Under heaven's beauteous dome,  
And when the love of heaven seems to breathe upon  
the air,  
And birds and beasts and people are happy every-  
where,  
Then 'tis good to pause a moment for words of praise  
and prayer  
And thank God for Home Sweet Home.

#### The Meaning of Christmas

The Outlook.

Is there not danger that the spiritual element will drop wholly out of our holidays: that Thanksgiving Day will become dedicated to dinner and football; Christmas to gift-giving and social reunions; Easter to flowers and music? But surely this is not all. Each of these days has also its sacred significance: Thanksgiving celebrates the God of nature, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; Christmas, the God incarnate, who for us men and our salvation came down to earth, to interpret the heart of the Infinite to us, by showing us the "human life of God;" Easter, the risen Christ, and so the "living God," who ever dwells on the earth and in his indwelling brings with him the gift of life.

If we really believe what we profess to believe—that the Eternal was once focused in a human life; that God is no longer the Unknown; that he has tabernacled among men; that he has purposely obscured that power and that wisdom which the world has been apt to take as his divinity, in order that he might manifest to us that love which alone constitutes divinity; that we have not to see heaven to see the glory of God, since the glory of God is love and the glory of love is self sacrifice; that while we are straining our eyes and trying to peer into the impenetrable future that may behold God's glory, the inhabitants of the celestial sphere are looking over the battlements of the Holy City that they may see that glory in its splendid manifestation on the earth—if we believe this, our Christmas Day will be one of sacred and solemn joyfulness, a joyfulness making sacred the merriment in the child-filled home where life abounds, but giving also is a sacred peace in the homes where the merry voices of childhood are no longer heard. For not even the vacant chair and the silence of a child-bereft home can deprive of joy the heart of him who believes that the birth of Christ was the advent of the Son of God and the gift of a new and divine life to the children of men.

"We have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

This to the Christian believer is the sacred

significance of Christmas. This is the message of the Christmas bells, this the meaning of the music, this the inspiration of the gift-giving, this the sacred source of all its innocent merry-making. Let us not forget it.

#### An Abused Mother

A story from the "Youth's Companion" has a moral that is not very deeply hidden:

The rather shabbily dressed but spotlessly neat little old lady who boarded the train at a small Western station had no sooner seated herself and disposed of her numerous pieces of hand baggage, than she began to cast about for some one to talk to. The kindly face of the middle-aged woman across the aisle seemed to offer some encouragement.

"My folks say I can't ride a mile without striking up an acquaintance with some one," the old lady said, with a smile, "and I guess it's so, too; but it always seems to make the time go faster to have some one to talk to, and I like to be sociable. If you don't mind I'll come over an' set with you."

"That's right, I shall be glad to have you," was the kindly response.

"I going clear out a hundred miles beyond Denver," volunteered the old lady when she had changed her seat and taken some knitting from her pocket.

"Excuse me if I knit while we visit," she said. "I might as well be improving the time. I'm knitting some stockings for a little granddaughter of mine, to kind of help her mother out. Her husband's out of work and they've got five children to provide for and winter is coming on, so I've set out to knit two pair of stockings apiece for the children. I like to help out all I can."

"I'm going out to my youngest daughter's now. She telegraphed for me yesterday. Her oldest boy has scarlet fever, and it may run right thru the family. She isn't able to hire anybody, so she sent for me and I am going to help her out. I reckon we shall have a pretty hard time of it, but I sha'n't mind if we pull them thru all safe and sound."

"Do you live in the town in which you boarded the train?"

"Dear me, no! I live in Ohio when I'm at home. It's my second son lives there where I got on. He met with an accident eight weeks ago—broke his leg in two places beside being hurt in other ways, and they sent for me to help them and take care of the children, for his wife had to look after him. We've both had our hands full, you may be sure."

"Before I went there I'd been in Illinois most all winter, staying with my third daughter's husband and children while she, poor girl, went to Mexico for her lungs. The doctor ordered her to stay there all winter, and so she sent for me to take her place at home. Several of the children had the measles, but we never let her know a thing about it. I was thankful I could do for them. I don't know what they'd done if it hadn't been so I could go an' help them out."

"Have you a home of your own?"

"Oh yes: I've a real cozy little house, and when the last of my eight children was married and settled down I thought I should have a quiet time all by myself, but—" there was a pathetic little quaver in the old lady's voice, and a suspicion of tears in her eyes—"somehow it seems as if I was needed all the time to help the children out some way or other. I guess I ain't averaged two months in twelve in my own house for five years."

There was a little pause, and when the old lady went on the smile had come back to the patient face, and the voice regained its steadiness. "I'm real thankful I've got the health and strength to be useful," she said "I only hope 'Liza's children won't have the scarlet fever very hard, 'cause I was going to Jonathan's some time the last of next month. He's my oldest son. His wife is in failing health, and they want me to come on and spend the winter. I reckon I better go if I can help 'em out any."

Poor patient old soul, the type of many mothers whose children never cease their demands, even after they have homes of their own! No doubt she did spend the winter with Jonathan, and no doubt Jonathan would feel very much hurt and be very indignant if any one should call him selfish.

#### Two Gentlemen

On a crowded trolley car going out of Boston, one evening, an old woman was packed in the crowd in the narrow aisle where the standing room was all taken. She was bent with age, and was very feeble. Her shabby dress and worn shawl told of her poverty. Near where this woman was standing sat two persons—one was a well-to-do man, the other was a ragged newsboy. Tired from his work, the little fellow's head now and then dropped on his shoulder, and his weary eyelids closed.

Awaking from one of these naps, he saw standing near him the shabby old woman, and he put his little hand out on hers and said, very gently, but manfully: "You must be tired. Take my seat."

There was the making of a splendid gentleman in that boy.

The other is a street-car story, too. A twelve year old boy, barefooted, with patched clothes, passed thru a car. As he returned, he gave a little jump thru the door, and his bare foot touched a man's knee, and left a little mud on it. Turning round on the platform, he raised his hat and said, very politely, in a clear tone, "Please excuse me."

There was another lad with the instincts of a gentleman.—*Sunday School Advocate.*

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